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HOUSE PASSES FY2010 AGRICULTURE APPROPRIATIONS BILL

Investments Made in Wisconsin Agriculture and Rural Communities

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Seventh District Congressman Dave Obey (D-WI) said that the Agriculture Appropriations Bill which passed the House today, “makes investments in agriculture and rural communities including a number of provisions that are especially important in Wisconsin.”

Included in the conference report is \$350 million in additional assistance for dairy farmers. Congressman Obey and U.S. Senator Herb Kohl successfully retained these funds as part of the House-Senate compromise version of the FY2010 Agriculture Appropriations Bill. The agreement includes \$290 million in direct support to dairy farmers using guidelines to be determined by the Secretary of Agriculture under an expedited process and \$60 million in cheese and dairy product purchases for food banks and other nutrition and feeding programs. “We need to help dairy farmers who are struggling with milk prices that have fallen to historic lows while the costs of production – including feed, fertilizer, and fuel – have grown,” said Obey.

“This bill also addresses a number of other serious needs of rural communities,” said Obey, the Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee. “These are tough economic times and we need to bolster the help available to rural families and communities. We have made significant investments in an effort to benefit farmers and rural communities and to create more economic opportunity.”

“The bill invests in a number of programs that are vital to combating the spread of animal and plant diseases throughout Wisconsin and the United States,” Obey said. Among these are:

- \$1.5 million to assist with further development of Wisconsin’s nationally-recognized animal ID program to provide for a 48-hour traceback capability in the event of an animal disease outbreak such as Mad Cow and foot and mouth. Wisconsin’s premises registration program has been declared the model for the nation by USDA;
- \$1.024 million to combat Chronic Wasting Disease among wild and captive deer in Wisconsin, which will help the state deal with the costs associated with hunting, testing and

disposal of affected animals;

- \$939,000 to combat John's Disease, a debilitating disease in cattle which is similar to Crohn's Disease in humans, by developing and implementing a disease control strategy;
- \$588,000 for the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to track and contain the outbreak of Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia, a devastating disease that has been found in a wide variety of fish throughout the Great Lakes. Wisconsin has 360 commercial fish farms and a \$4.5 billion sportsfishing industry in the state that fishery experts fear could be at great risk, making it vital to get a handle on this terrible disease.

Other Wisconsin priorities included in the conference agreement are:

- \$2.5 million for the Dairy Forage Research Center. Obey and Senator Kohl have worked together over the past several years to provide support for this research center in Marshfield. The research conducted by the center, which is a unit of the Agriculture Research Service (ARS), is focused on improving the efficiency and environmental impact of dairy farming in the United States;
- \$2 million to support the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture's Value Added Dairy Initiative (VADI) which started in 2004 to help restore and reinvigorate Wisconsin's dairy sector through modernization of dairy farms, increased production of higher-value products, increased recognition of Wisconsin's dairy products in consumer markets, enhanced supply chain management and innovative dairy industry partnerships;
- \$1.25 million that Obey and Senator Kohl requested to develop a Cranberry Research Program within the Agricultural Research Service of USDA. The 2008 Farm Bill included authorization for research grants to study new technologies to assist cranberry growers in complying with federal and state environmental regulations, increasing production, developing growing techniques, establishing more efficient growing methods and educating cranberry growers about sustainable growth practices;
- \$835,000 for the Wisconsin Grazing Lands Initiative. Many small dairy farmers have found that they can be more efficient and profitable by adopting low-input and sustainable farming practices, but their success often depends on getting specialist help, including technical assistance and continuing education. The Wisconsin Grazing Lands Initiative provides that help for Wisconsin dairy farmers;
- \$1.4 million to help establish the Wisconsin Institute for Sustainable Technology (WIST) at UW-Stevens Point which will provide state-of-the-art education to industrial sciences, engineering and natural resources students. The effort applies new technologies to enhance energy production including biomass, bio-fuel, bio-refinery, paper science and nanotechnology to provide solutions to real-world problems with a focus on stimulating the state and regional economy;
- \$500,000 to fund research at the UW-Marshfield Agriculture Research Station to create renewable energy sources from farm and dairy processing waste. The effort is a public-private partnership working with Mullins Cheese, the Marshfield Area Chamber of Commerce, and Northcentral Technical College;
- \$450,000 to support an extension education and outreach program at the Red Cliff Cold

Climate fish hatchery. The State of Wisconsin has made a significant investment of \$3 million in the facility which aims to address the unique needs of cold water fish farms and hatcheries in northern Wisconsin and neighboring states through on-farm consultation, regional training programs and education materials and publications, helping farmers overcome the steep learning curve associated with production practices and management of northern aquaculture;

- \$277,000 for the Potato Pest Management program, a collaboration of the Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers, the UW-Madison and the World Wildlife Fund to develop integrated pest management approaches that will reduce dependency on pesticide use in the production of potatoes and vegetables. Funding for this 10-year collaboration has resulted in the accelerated adoption of biological Integrated Pest Management (IPM) systems, reduced reliance on toxic pesticides and helped grow potatoes to meet stringent ecologically-sound standards. In 2003, the US Department of Agriculture recognized the program for its outstanding work, giving it the Secretary's Honor Award for maintaining and enhancing the national natural resources and environment;

- \$174,000 for a technology transfer program at the University of Wisconsin – Stout. For more than 10 years, funding through USDA has enabled UW-Stout and the Northwest Manufacturing Outreach Center to provide technical assistance to help improve efficiency at over a thousand small manufacturing businesses throughout northern and central Wisconsin. Those efforts have created or saved more than 2,600 manufacturing jobs and have generated a total sales impact estimated at \$100 million.

“The final bill must still be approved by the Senate and signed by the President before it becomes law,” Obey noted.

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